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Our Mother.

A MEMORIAL

OF

MRS. CATHARINE LOUISA WHITCOMB STONE.

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF HER CHILDREN BY HER BELOVED PASTOR,

REV. A. C. THOMPSON, D.D.

"CHRISTIAN, tell it to thy brother,
From life's dawning to its end;
Every hand may clasp another,
And the loneliest bring a friend;
Till the veil is drawn aside,
And from where her home shall be,
Bursts upon the enfranchised Bride
The triumphant, 'Come and see!'"

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I. THE MOTIVE.

"The music of her voice we hear
Above the world's rough roar,
Like whispers from another sphere,
Some calm Elysian shore."

We would not have her words or even the tones of her voice become mute. We cannot fail ourselves to keep the memory of her fresh in our own hearts, but we desire to prolong such precious remembrance among her grandchildren, and to perpetuate, in some measure, the sweet influence of her character and life. Hence this domestic Memorial for the sake of our own more immediate family and friends.

II. EARLY LIFE.

"Our boast is not that we deduce our birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;
But higher far our proud pretensions rise —
Children of parents passed into the skies."

Our mother, Catharine Louisa Whitcomb, was born in Boston, December 23, 1802, and we never hear the beautiful asteroid, Pallas, spoken of without thinking that it was discovered the same year. Her father, Tilly Whitcomb, was a native of Bolton, Massachusetts; her mother, Elizabeth Epps, was a native of Canterbury, England. Our pastor, the Rev. Dr. Thompson, when visiting that cathedral town in September, 1871, found that none of that name were then living there. In early

years she attended a school taught by the Misses Davis, in Boston. Among the incidents of that period which remained fresh in her recollection was this — that when, after the War of 1812, peace was declared, and announced in town, she went home from school that day swinging her bag in great glee, and crying "Peace! Peace!" Later years of school life were spent at Dow Academy, Wakefield, New Hampshire, where she attended, with two of her brothers about the years 1817 and 1818. Her musical tastes and accomplishments, which continued through life, were due in part to the circumstance that when a little girl she boarded for two or more years away from home, in order to enjoy the training of M. Louvier, an eminent teacher of music.

III. MARRIED LIFE.

"HAPPY — happier far than thou
With the laurel on thy brow —
She that makes the humblest hearth
Lovely but to one on earth."

This she did for our father. They were married at Boston, November 22, 1825, Dr. Freeman and Mr. Greenwood of King's Chapel officiating. Their first home was also in Boston, and a happy home it was, as they both often testified. The betrothal pledge to love, honor, and cherish was fulfilled, in letter and spirit, most faithfully. She developed a good deal of quiet and wise domestic statesmanship. Her sincerity and serenity, her unfailing devotion and fore-

thought were then — and ever afterward — a great power under the roof. She never took up the wretched notion that it is discreditable for a woman to superintend the minutest detail of family concerns, or that patient toil is otherwise than honorable. She never became infected with the rage for fine ladyship. Nobody ever pronounced her one of the women whom the world could dispense with. As Edmund Burke used to say that "every care vanished the moment he entered his own house," so could our father say; and if he had outlived her, he might well have reproduced an epitaph from a churchyard in England, inscribed by a husband after sixty years of wedded life, "She always made home happy."

IV. AS MOTHER.

"A MOTHER'S love! — how sweet the name!
The holiest, purest, tenderest flame,
That kindles from above;
Within a heart of earthly mould,
As much of heaven as heart could hold,
Nor through eternity grows cold —
That is a mother's love."

Her heart made the words *mother* and *affection* synonymous to us. What tenderness, what assiduity! From the dawn of infancy onward, and from the dawn of each day till we were at our slumbers again, her thought was centred upon us. We quite agree with the one who says, "A mother's heart is the tenderest spot of humanity." From inclination as well as from the demands of such devotedness the family became her

sphere — and oh, how well did she fill it! Very little immediate care was remitted to hired hands. In her general guardianship, in her counsels, in painstaking to form right habits on the part of us all, she was unwearied. Habits of prayer and reverence for God's word called forth special endeavors. "The future destiny of a child," said Napoleon, "is always the work of its mother," and our indebtedness to her is more than can be easily expressed. But maternal fondness did not degenerate into weak indulgence. A throne was maintained, though invisible. We have the greatest reason for gratitude that she insisted upon implicit obedience. This was done with calm serenity, but it was done.

"Still with thoughtful care providing —
Sweetly ruling, softly chiding —
Such our mother's gentle guiding."

V. AS NEIGHBOR.

"The memory of a kindly word
For long gone by,
The fragrance of a fading flower
Sent lovingly,
The gleaming of a sudden smile
Or sudden tear,
The warmer pressure of the hand,
The tone of cheer,
The hush that means 'I cannot speak,
But I have heard!'
The note that only bears a verse
From God's own Word:—
Such tiny things we hardly count
As ministry:
The givers deeming they have shown
Scant sympathy:
But when the heart is overwrought
Oh, who can tell
The power of such tiny things
To make it well!"

Faithful and devoted as was our mother in all home duties and relations, she could not limit her thoughts to that little world. Her neighborly interest was always lively, and, with her, neighborhood meant a much wider range than that of houses in sight. Her kindness was a fresh perennial spring; it kept glowing quietly year in and year out, and so long as life lasted. Her interest in the cultivation of flowers connected itself with the remembrance of friends. Their birthdays or other anniversaries were sure to be regularly brightened by a bouquet; nor would the funeral service be forgotten. The flowers might fade, but the aroma of such habitual and unostentatious acts was lasting. The neighborhood was made permanently brighter and happier. Her character was a beautiful bond of good neighborhood. The tear of

sympathy was no stranger to her cheek. Not a few of the young generation instinctively called her "Grandmother Stone." Those who served her were thoughtfully served by her. No one ever heard bitter criticisms from her lips; and who ever criticized her? If the value of a life is to be estimated largely by the absence of pain given and harm done, by the amount of pleasant thoughts awakened, and the number of tears dried, then must a high value be set upon hers. If Josephine could say on her deathbed that she had never caused a tear to flow, not less could our mother say the same.

VI. ON THE WHOLE.

"It is not beauty, wealth, or fame,
That can endear a dying name,
And write it on the heart;
'T is humble worth, 't is duty done,
A course with cheerful patience run,—
By these the faithful sigh is won,
The warm tear made to start."

Making all due allowance for filial bias, it does seem to us that our dear mother, taken all in all, was an uncommon woman; unfeignedly modest, with no ambition to shine, contented with her lot. She was as far removed as could well be from the unwomanly woman, the one who is only an imitation of man. She finely illustrated the power of the gentle influence of unassuming goodness. Always courteous, she was never ceremoni-

ous. She never loaded herself with ornaments, nor with finery of any kind; she was herself the jewel of the house, and a treasure in the community. The chief secret of this was, she possessed that first great requisite — all too rare — of self-forgetfulness. There is something which neither the sparkle of wit, the impressiveness of learning, nor anything else can ever achieve, if associated with self-seeking or self-indulgence. Our mother had a good mind, good manners, and a culture quite above the average; but she did not live for self; and it was that which made her a benediction — which imparted the attraction that not only outlasts the lilies and roses of youth, but which grows more beautiful and more influential the older one grows. Benevolence was vital with her; and so, with John Newton, she could say, "I can live no longer than I can love."

VII. THE SOURCE.

"O WOMAN! though thy fragile form
Bows like the willow to the storm,
Ill suited in unequal strife
To brave the ruder scenes of life:
Yet, if the power of grace divine
Find in her lowly heart a shrine,
Then, in thy very weakness strong,
Thou winn'st thy noiseless course along;
Weaving thy influence with the ties
Of sweet domestic charities,
And softening haughtier spirits down,
By happy contact with thine own."

Whence came this beautiful character and life? It could not have been the outgrowth of native excellence, nor due to the influence of temperament or of surroundings merely. There was a germ which is foreign to the soil

of this world, an element which comes only from above. Paganism knows nothing of it; Mohammedanism cannot produce it. How often it is that our Heavenly Father takes to give! Previous to 1838 He had taken two little boys, each at the time an only son. In the spring of that year, a beautiful little girl, two and a half years old, was also taken, and that led to a change of heart, a change of religious views, and ecclesiastical connection. When, in November, 1838, she connected herself, on profession of faith, with the Eliot Church, her testimony was: "The doctrines of grace are very precious to me, my only trust is in the Saviour." Her experience and belief were in accord with that Book which was her guide and comfort — "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," "Being justified

freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Nothing short of the merits and mediation of Him who on the cross said, "Behold, thy mother!" nothing short of the indwelling and agency of the Holy Comforter promised by Him, could meet her felt needs, and have made our mother what she was. While Jay's "Morning Exercises," Hannah More's "Private Devotions," and other religious works were familiar to her, the Bible was not only a daily, but almost an hourly companion. Sacred poetry afforded much delight, and among favorite hymns were: —

"Whilst thee I seek, protecting Power."

"Guide me, O thou great Jehovah."

"What various hindrances we meet."

"Behold, the morning sun."

"Glory to thee, my God, this night."

The strong confidence in God's providence which is inculcated in Holy Writ, she had attained unto, beyond the usual measure. "We don't know why, but it is for some wise purpose"; "It is all right"; "It is all for the best," were some of her habitual sayings.

VIII. THE CLOSE.

"PAST all pain forever,
Done with sickness now;
Let us close thine eyes, mother,
Let us smooth thy brow;
Rest, and health, and gladness —
These thy portion now;
Let us press thy hand, mother,
Let us kiss thy brow."

The fiftieth anniversary of the marriage of our parents, November 22, 1875, was a joyous occasion. Numerous friends — among them three who attended the marriage service half a century before, one of whom was a bridesmaid on that occasion — were happy to express their congratulations. Four years and five months more of wedded life

were granted to our father and mother. The trying event of April 18, 1880, which sundered the marriage tie, left her mourning deeply, but not murmuring. The happy union of fifty-five years, so unusual for its length, could not come to an end without occasioning a sad wrench. The three years of widowhood, though not exactly a period of gloom, was yet a shaded interval. Vital forces suffered a decline, but there was a tender resignation and a struggling cheerfulness. Though past fourscore, she would seat herself at the piano, when asked — as, for instance, by Dr. Thompson at his last call upon her — and with a delicate touch would play "Bluebells of Scotland," "Blue-eyed Mary," and other pieces which had been learned full threescore-and-ten years ago. Yet her thoughts were evidently most of the

time far away, and the "Song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," was sounding in her ear. Anticipating a somewhat prolonged absence from the homestead, she had literally set her house in order; the trunks were packed. That contemplated change, however, did not take place, for she was at once to see "the land that is very far off." Sunday morning, September second, ushered her into the world where "The sun shall no more go down."

In our memory, if not upon her monument, are inscribed these lines: —

"A Sarah to her husband,
A Eunice to her children,
A Lois to her grandchildren,
A Lydia to God's ministers,
A Martha to her guests,
A Dorcas to the poor,
An Anna to her Lord."